

Feb. 19, 1967

FOIA b3b

Sanitized - Approved For Release : CIA-RDP75-00

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Just for Spy(te)

OUR COUNTRY never has shown much aptitude for espionage. Starting with Nathan Hale, our agents have always had the embarrassing habit of getting caught. The ones that don't get caught aren't much help, either. Whatever happens around the world always seems to come as a surprise to us.

We seem willing enough to spend money to get our information, but we always seem to be spending it on the wrong people. They either turn in blank pages instead of enemy blueprints, or they make some public announcement that we are paying them to snoop.

The National Student Association now has made a loud, though grudging, admission that our Central Intelligence Agency has been slipping it some side money all the way back to 1950. Good Heavens! No wonder our taxes are going up!

At the same time the organization admits it has been taking our money for close to fifteen years, it says it has not given us a dime's worth of valuable information. It is only in the last two years that the CIA even bothered to cut down on the allowance.

Along the way we gave them rent-free headquarters in Washington in the form of a stylish townhouse and an extra twenty thousand dollars for furniture.

In passing, I might mention I do not think Washington is the most likely place for us to plant some spies. For a starter I'd try Moscow, London, Berlin, Paris, Rome, Havana, Santo Domingo, Rio de Janeiro, and one of those nice little towns at either end of the Panama Canal. Even then I would not throw my money around. I'd put these agents on a piece work basis or maybe a small expense account and an equally small yearly commission. The commission would not be paid, of course, if they were discovered.

The CIA always has made me a little nervous. Ever since Allen Dulles was the head of our spy group I have been a little worried about our ability to move around with any degree of secrecy. Allen was a secret agent for us during World War II. He

operated out of Switzerland. This was not particularly clever on his part, as there were many more spies in Switzerland during World War II than there were Swiss.

Allen's principle duty was to arrange the German surrender in Italy. In the books I have read about his activities, very little credit is given to General Mark Clark and the American Army. Allen wheeled and dealt all over the place. He acted about as stealthy as a guy walking down the street with a sandwich board advertising hot dogs at ten cents a dog. He conferred with everybody. Nazi generals and Italian generals were slithering in and out of his office like he was featuring free lunch.

If there was any group that was not aware of what he was doing, it had to be the local school children who were too busy in the playground to pay much attention to an eccentric American who smoked a pipe constantly in a desperate effort to look like Sherlock Holmes.

I do not see why we need spies, anyway. Most countries come right out and tell us on an average of twice a week that they do not like us. We can ship them thousands of bushels of wheat and every available can of baked beans in our local supermarkets and they will still tell us they would like to bomb our pants off.

Obviously they are not going to war with us. Such an action on their part would delay their next shipment. They are so used to our free delicacies by now that the thought of spoiling our harvest or damaging any of our canning factories must give them the shudders. I will bet we could even bring Charles de Gaulle back into line by refusing to ship France any of our California Wines.

I wonder who's going to get that Washington townhouse and the \$20,000 worth of furniture, now that the National Student Association will no longer be effective. I wish they'd give it to me. To pay them back I will sneak down to Tijuana, Mexico every weekend and spy on the nightclubs and the racetrack.